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Grammar: Subject – Verb Agreement





What Is Subject Verb Agreement?

- **Subject-verb agreement** refers to the number of the **subject** (whom or what a sentence is about) and **verb** (what the **subject** is or does).
- Use a singular **subject** with a singular **verb** and a plural **subject** with a plural **verb**.
- Now, the **subject** agrees with the **verb**.



What is a singular and plural verb?

A **singular verb** is one that has 's' added to it in the present tense, such as writes, plays, runs, and uses forms such as is, was, has, does.

A **plural verb** does not have an 's' added to it, such as write, play, run, and uses forms such as are, were, have and do.



Let us discuss some Important Rules of Subject Verb and Agreement



Rule #1

Subjects and verbs must agree in number.

This is an essential rule that forms the background of the concept.

Example:

1. The ***dog bites*** when he is angry.
2. The ***dogs bite*** when they are angry.

Drill:

My friends _____ me every weekend.

- a. visit
- b. visits
- c. visites

ANSWER : VISIT



Prepositional phrases between the subject and verb usually do not affect agreement. Learn to ignore the phrase and isolate the subject & verb – check for agreement.

Example:

The *colors of the rainbow* *are* beautiful.

Drill:

1. The shirts **in the closet** _____ new.
 - a. is
 - b. Are
2. The boy **on the stairs** _____ my cousin.
 - a. is
 - b. Are
3. The dog **sitting under the stairs** _____ my pet.
 - a. is
 - b. Are

ANSWER :

1. ARE
2. is
3. is



Rule #3

Don't get confused by the words that come between the subject and verb; they do not affect agreement.

Example:

The *dog*, **who is chewing on my jeans**, *is* a playful pet.

Drill:

My friends, who are my colleagues as well, ¹ ² ³ **visit/visits/visited** me every weekend.



Rule #4

When sentences start with “there” or “here,” the subject will always be placed after the verb, so care needs to be taken to identify it correctly.

Example:

There *is* a **problem** with the balance sheet.

Here *are* the **papers** you requested.

Drill:

Frame two different sentences starting with ‘there’ and ‘here’ in the chat box.



Rule #5

If two subjects are joined by '***and***', they typically require a plural verb form.

Example:

The cow **and** the pig ***are jumping*** over the moon.

Drill:

CHOOSE THE CORRECT ONE:

Mary and John usually (plays/play) together.

ANSWER : PLAY



Rule #6

The verb is **singular** if the two subjects separated by '*and*' refer to the same person or thing.

Example:

IELTS and PTE is taught by John.

Drill:

CHOOSE THE CORRECT ONE:

This ____ the long and the short case study of the matter.

- a. is
- b. are



Rule #7

Indefinite pronouns typically take singular verbs.

(The following indefinite pronouns are always singular: one, anyone, everyone, no one, someone, anybody, everybody, nobody, somebody.)

Example :

Everybody wants to be loved.

Drill:

QUICK EXERCISE:

1. _____ (Do/Does) anyone want to join me.
2. No one _____ (has/have) joined the meeting.

ANSWER : 1. DOES
2. HAS



PRACTICE 1

1. Annie and her brothers (is, are) at school.
2. Either my mother or my father (is, are) coming to the meeting.
3. The dog or the cats (is, are) outside.
4. Either my shoes or your coat (is, are) always on the floor.
5. George and Tamara (doesn't, don't) want to see that movie.
6. Benito (doesn't, don't) know the answer.
7. One of my sisters (is, are) going on a trip to France.
8. The man with all the birds (live, lives) on my street.
9. The movie, including all the previews, (take, takes) about two hours to watch.
10. The players, as well as the captain, (want, wants) to win.

ANSWER : 1. DOES
2. HAS



Rule #8

If two infinitives are separated by 'and' they take the plural form of the verb.

An infinitive verb is essentially the base form of the verb with the word "to" in front of it. When you use an infinitive verb, the "to" is a part of the verb. It is not acting as a preposition in this case.

FOR EXAMPLE

to be

to have

to hold

to sleep

to spend

Example :

To walk and to chew gum require great skill.

Drill:

Exercise:

To teach and to learn ____ concentration. (need/needs)

ANSWER: NEED



Rule #9

When gerunds are used as the subject of a sentence they take the singular verb form of the verb, but when they are linked by '**and**' they take the plural form.

Example :

Standing in the water was a bad idea. *Swimming* in the ocean and *playing drums* are my hobbies.

Drill:

Talking while having dinner ____ a wrong trait. (is/are)



Rule #10

Collective nouns like herd, senate, class, crowd, etc. usually take a singular verb form.

Example :

The Army is coming.

Drill:

QUICK EXERCISE:

1. The library _____ (has/have) many books.
2. A bunch of keys ____ (is /are) missing.

ANSWER : 1. HAS
2. IS



Rule #11

Titles of books, movies, novels, etc. are treated as singular and take a singular verb.

Example :

The book 'Two States' is written by Chetan Bhagat.

Drill:

Complete the sentence.

1. Fast and furious ____ an interesting movie. (is/are)

ANSWER: IS



Rule #12

If the words *each*, *every*, or *no* come before the subject, the verb is singular.

Example:

No *smoking and drinking* is allowed .

Every *man and woman* is required to check in.

Drill:

Complete the sentence.

1. Every dog ____ a day. (has/have)
2. Each student _____ to submit the form. (has/have)

ANSWER : 1. HAS
2. HAS



Rule #13

If the subjects are both singular and are connected by the words *or, nor, neither/nor, either/or, or not only/but also* the verb is singular.

Example :

Either Jane or John is to blame for the loss in the company.

Drill:

Complete the sentence.

1. Neither James nor Harry _____ the truth. (knows/know)
2. Not only John but also James _____ going to join us. (is/are)

ANSWER :1. KNOWS

2. IS



Rule #14

The only time when the object of the preposition factors into the decision of plural or singular verb forms is when noun and pronoun subjects like some, half, none, more, all, etc. are followed by a prepositional phrase. In these sentences, the **object** of the preposition determines the form of the verb.

Example :

All of the *chicken* is gone .

All of the *chickens* are gone.

Drill:

Complete the sentence.

1. Some of the children _____ looking for the play area. (is/are)
2. None of the teacher _____ on Sunday. (come/comes)

ANSWER : 1.ARE
2.COMES



Rule #15

If the subjects are both plural and are connected by the words *or, nor, neither/nor, either/or, and not only/but also*, the verb is plural.

Example :

Not only **dogs** but also **cats** *are* available at the animal shelter.

Drill:

Complete the sentence.

1. Either my friends or my brothers (is/are) going to sell the car.
2. Neither my sisters nor friends (was/were) going to buy a house.

ANSWER : 1. ARE

2. WERE



Rule #16

If one subject is singular and one plural and the words are connected by the words *or, nor, neither/nor, either/or, and not only/but also*, you use the verb form of the subject that is nearest the verb.

Example :

Do your *sisters or your brother* wants any pizza?

Drill:

ANSWER : 1. ARE
2. PLAYS

Complete the sentence.

1. Either my father or my brothers (is/are) going to sell the car.
2. Neither my sisters nor my mother (play/plays) any game.



PRACTICE 2

11. Either answer (is, are) acceptable.
12. Every one of those books (is, are) fiction.
13. Nobody (know, knows) the trouble I've seen.
14. (Is, Are) the news telecasted at five or six?
15. Mathematics (is, are) John's favorite subject, while Civics (is, are) Andrea's favorite subject.
16. Eight dollars (is, are) the price of a movie these days.
17. (Is, Are) the tweezers in this drawer?
18. Your pants (is, are) at the cleaner's.
19. There (was, were) fifteen candies in that bag. Now there (is, are) only one left!
20. The committee (debates, debate) these questions carefully.
21. The committee members (leads, lead) very different lives in private.
22. The Prime Minister, together with his wife, (greet, greets) the press cordially.
23. All of the CDs, even the scratched one, (is, are) in this case.



Answer:

11. Either answer **is** acceptable.
12. Every one of those books **is** fiction.
13. Nobody **knows** the trouble I've seen.
14. **Is** the news telecasted at five or six?
15. Mathematics **is** John's favorite subject, while Civics **is** Andrea's favorite subject.
16. Eight dollars **is** the price of a movie these days.
17. **Are** the tweezers in this drawer?
18. Your pants **are** at the cleaner's.
19. There **were** fifteen candies in that bag. Now there **is** only one left!
20. The committee **debates** these questions carefully.
21. The committee members **lead** very different lives in private.
22. The Prime Minister, together with his wife, **greet**s the press cordially.
23. All of the CDs, even the scratched one, **are** in this case.